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Inaugural Address,

DELIVERED BEFORE

“The Berkshire Medical Institution,”

AT THE FIRST ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT,

December 25, 1823.

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BY JOSIAH GOODHUE, M. D.

PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTION.

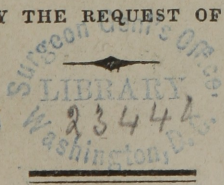
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“Heal the sick.”

JESUS CHRIST.

Box 3

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An Address.



THE moral improvement of the mind excepted, there is no science so important to mankind as that of medicine. And yet it is not a little remarkable, that almost all the arts and sciences, which are calculated to ameliorate human nature, have gone before it ; and have left the study and practice of medicine far, very far, in the back ground. The manufacture of several kinds of cloth, as it relates to their texture, it is probable was carried to as great perfection two hundred years ago, as it is now. It is supposed, that the arts of sculpture, painting and dying, were as perfect, a thousand years since, as they are at the present time. It is, however, not more than one hundred years, since the prescriptions of learned physicians were often nothing more than a farrago of the most inert simples ; and, if a powerful remedy happened to be amongst them, its efficacy was nearly destroyed, by its combination with those which had no medical power.

We may also conclude, that the practice of surgery was as little improved, as that of physick, when we find its operations performed in the most bungling and cruel manner, and the most important cures constantly effected by the seventh son, the royal touch, and the dead man's hand.* Percival Pott, acknowledged to be one of the best surgeons in the world, wrote since my remembrance ; and, strange to relate, he advised to remove a circular piece of the scalp,

* Medical men, philosophers, priests, and all the world besides, believed in sideral influence. And to the disgrace of some of our best Almanacks, the foolish idea is still cherished in them.

where the operation of trepanning was necessary. But he made many very important improvements, and much simplified several operations.

The invention of paper was in the year 1000 ; of spectacles, in 1285 ; of the mariner's compass, in 1300 ; of the art of printing, about 1423 ; and of the telescope, in 1590. But the circulation of the blood, on a knowledge of which the healing art so intimately depends, was not fully discovered until 1619, by the immortal Harvey.

The last half century has produced a most important and astonishing revolution in the science of medicine. In the island of Great-Britain, Doctor William Cullen, (whatever may be thought of his theory) undoubtedly stands foremost in the ranks of the improvers of the science. Drs. Thomas and Armstrong, and many others, have followed him, in brilliant and rapid succession.

I have not a London Edition, but I believe that Benjamin Bell wrote within the last forty years. And there can be little doubt but that his system of surgery was, when he wrote, the best extant. His industry in investigating, and perspicuity in describing diseases, and the method of cure, stand almost unrivalled. And although there have been great improvements made in surgery since his day, yet he has undoubtedly laid the broad foundation, on which that noble profession now rests. The Hunters, and the Munros', John and Charles Bell, the Cooper's, Mr. Travers, and Mr. Abernethy, have been, and now are shining lights, in the British horizon of surgery. But I must not omit to mention Doctors Rush, Loyd, Danforth, Wister, Physick, Dorsey, Nathan Smith, the Bards, the Warrens, and the venerable Holyoke, as bright ornaments in the American constellation.

But notwithstanding the great and innumerable improvements, which have been made in physick and surgery in the

last fifty years, yet the subjects are not exhausted. A large and extensive field lies open for cultivation.

There are but two things necessary to make an eminent physician, and a great surgeon ; *a good mind, and unremitting industry*. The latter is in the power of every one ; and yet ten fail of rising to eminence by neglecting to cultivate it, where one fails for want of capacity. Industry, *industry*, my young friends, is the univereal panacea, the great areanum, “ the one thing needful ” to your future usefulness and eminence in your profession. If the immortal Cicero was correct, when he said, “ Men never resemble the gods so much, as when giving health to men ; ” then surely you have every thing that is noble and praiseworthy, to stimulate your exertions. Your pride, your ambition, and, above all, a desire to do the most possible good in your day and generation, unitedly urge you. Your instructors may teach, and your professors lay open the various subjects of the departments assigned them, with the utmost perspicuity ; yet, if you are remiss in your exertions, it will be all, as it relates to your improvement, as water spilt upon the ground. Who, fired with a noble ambition of excelling in his profession,—his breast imbued with the milk of human kindness, and exulting in the desire of doing good,—would not spend the live long day, and burn the midnight lamp, in investigating the mysteries of his profession, and in laying a broad foundation, in theoretical and practical knowledge, for future usefulness ?

Knowledge, the legitimate child of industry and perseverance, when joined with goodness of heart, enables the venerable divine, by his doctrines and example, to point out, and lead, the way to heaven. It inspires the lawyer with eloquence, to snatch the widow and the orphan, the poor and the destitute, from the iron grasp of the oppressor. And it no less endues the physician with skill to turn aside the shaft of death, quench the burning fever, and replant the roses on

the faded cheek. It gives dexterity to the surgeon's hand to stanch the bleeding wound, restore the broken and emaciated limb, and let in the light of heaven upon the darkened eye.

But the study of medicine, if rightly improved, has a very important bearing on our moral and future destiny.—Notwithstanding the truth, that the whole creation is an immense volume, spread open to our view, and the name of God is written upon every page ; notwithstanding, “ the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work ;” yet it is the opinion of the great and good Dr. Paley, that there is nothing in nature, which more strongly evinces the being and attributes of the Creator, than the mechanism of the human body. That we are fearfully and wonderfully made, will appear evident, by following the anatomist but a little way in his investigations.—Nothing is more self-evident than that, where there is design, there must be a Designer. This strikes the child with the same force, that it does the philosopher. Shew an intelligent child any piece of curious mechanism, and he will immediately ask you, *Who made it ?* When we examine a watch, we perceive the wheels and the hands impelled by the elasticity of the spring, and the hands exactly indicating the hours and minutes of the day. We thence infer, that it must have been made by an artist. So, when we examine the human body, we perceive the alimentary tube, of great length, convolved in a most curious manner, and thickly studded with innumerable vessels, to absorb the nutritious part of the aliment, and convey it to one common receptacle ; and thence we find it taken up by a small tube, and conveyed from the abdomen, through the whole length of the thorax, and poured into the left subclavion vein. We perceive the heart and arteries, impelling the vital fluid, through every part of the body, for its nourishment and growth ; and the veins accompanying the arteries, ready to receive the reflux blood, and convey it back to the heart. The brain de-

rives its nervous power from the blood thrown to it by the heart ; and the heart continues its motion, by the nervous influence, which it derives from the brain. We perceive the bones to be levers, to which the muscles are attached, like cords, to perform the various motions of the body. We behold that sparkling gem, the eye, placed, not as blind chance might have placed it, in the back, or breast, but in the human face divine ; the only place in the body, where it could have answered the all important purpose, for which it was designed. On a minute examination, we discover its exquisite organization, constructed exactly upon the philosophical principles of opticks. Without something to give our minds the impression of sound, our whole race must have been dumb, and almost as ignorant as the beasts which graze upon the meadows. To prevent this dreadful calamity, the ear is added to the other organs of sense ; sound, with all its innumerable modulations, undulates upon the mind ; and the tongue, which would otherwise have been chained in everlasting silence, is let loose to the expression of all the variety of language. And has chance, blind chance, done all this ? Surely not.

A God ! a God ! proclaim the piercing eyes ;
A God ! a God ! the bounding heart replies.

But what renders the formation of this wonderful machine most eminently worthy of a God, is, its being animated by an intelligent mind, capable of originating and comparing ideas, and drawing the most accurate conclusions,—capable of contemplating the works of nature, of inventing the arts and sciences, and of soaring from nature, up to nature's God. Well may we exclaim with the psalmist, “ O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all.”

The natural inference from these premises, is, that He, who made the eye, must behold all our actions ; He, who planted the ear, must hear all our words ; and He, who formed the mind, must take cognizance of all our thoughts and

desires. And if this be true, how solicitous ought we to be, to know and do his will !

Having touched upon this infinitely important subject, the evidence of the being of a God, let us, for one moment, turn our eyes from this earth, to the heavens above. There we behold, firmly resting in open space, that glorious and stupendous orb, the sun, which, for six thousand years, has been pouring from his exhaustless store, deluges of light and heat upon the surrounding worlds. The earth, and several other immense globes constantly revolve around the sun, in the most exact order, all basking in his vivifying and prolific rays.

Leaving our solar system, let us extend our views to the fixed stars. Modern astronomy has discovered them to be suns, shining with unborrowed lustre. No doubt can be entertained, but that, like our sun, they have worlds revolving around them ; and that these worlds are all peopled with feeling, intelligent beings, running the race of immortality. When the devout astronomer contemplates this infinity of suns and worlds, he drops every particle of scepticism, prostrates himself in the dust, and exclaims, “ O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all. All these worlds, and systems of being, and millions more, which lie even beyond the ken of our imagination, thou didst bring out of nothing. Thou spakest the word, and they all stood forth in their native beauty, and at once began their everlasting career. O thou Being of beings, thou dost exist in, and of thyself ; the present moment is thy centre, and eternity thy circumference. Thy matchless power and wisdom are made known by thy works. Thine infinite love and benevolence are demonstrated, by thy providence and thy grace.”

But to return to the more appropriate theme of this Address. This Institution has been set on foot, and thus far carried on and supported, by the patriotism and energy of a

few individuals. The location appears to be very happily chosen. The surrounding country is remarkably pleasant and delightful. It is at a sufficient distance from all other medical schools, to preclude any necessity for collision.—The Commonwealth contains more than 500,000 inhabitants ; and it would be unreasonable to suppose, that medical instruction would be confined to one Seminary. If this is admitted, where can so eligible a situation be found, as this beautiful spot, in the western part of the state, and in the vicinity of Williams College, with which it is, and must be forever connected. Indeed, it must stand, or fall, with that Institution.

It ought to be matter of gratulation to every good man, (at least, in this part of the Commonwealth) that that Institution begins to emerge from its late state of depression.

I do not know what exertions have lately been made by the good people of Williamstown, and its vicinity, in behalf of the College. But it is hoped, they are not inattentive to its interests. After the novelty of a literary Institution has passed, the people of the town, where it is situated, are too apt to grow remiss in their endeavors to promote its prosperity ; and sometimes to withhold that attention to the students, which was at first shown to them. But this will not do.—The inhabitants, especially of a country town, if they would see a seminary continue to flourish, must be unremitting in their exertions and attentions. Ample funds are absolutely necessary to the flourishing state, or even the long continued existence, of any public literary Institution.

It is surprizing, that gentlemen of independent fortune are not stimulated,—at least by pride and self-interest,—to contribute largely to schemes of public utility. To be known and noticed, is the desire of almost every one. Let us suppose a man worth fifty thousand dollars, with but one or two children. If he makes them independent, by leaving

them all his property, universal experience has made it evident, that it will very probably prove their ruin. Now to prevent this, and gratify the desire of distinction, let him give ten or fifteen thousand dollars of it, to endow a professorship, which will assume his name ; and he is immortalized.

But there are doubtless many generous souls, who delight in doing good ; who need nothing more than to be informed of the good in their power to do, and they will at once be engaged in the delightful work.

I know of nothing so likely to promote the interest of this town, as this Medical Institution ; and in more ways than one. It will undoubtedly promote its pecuniary interest, by bringing money into the place. It will also raise the value of the landed interest. But there is another point of view, in which the benefit will be incalculable. As long as the Institution flourishes, there will always be men connected with it, of the first medical abilities, ready to visit the sick, in every extraordinary case, and contribute every thing to their recovery, which art, in its most improved state, can do. To send fifteen or twenty miles, in case of sudden emergency, for the best medical assistance, is not unfrequently tantamount to the loss of life ; but, by prompt assistance at your door, your beloved wife, or your dear child may be snatched from an untimely grave. When a man of sense wishes to build a durable and elegant house, he always employs workmen, who have been regularly and thoroughly educated in their trade. And surely it is of as much more importance to him to employ a well informed physician, or surgeon, as his health, his limbs, and his life are of more value than his property. Did people generally realize these things, they would take more pains than they do, to encourage the study of medicine, and to see that well educated medical men were settled amongst them.

With permission, I shall address a few words to the Professors in this Institution.

You, gentlemen, have assumed an arduous task, to which great responsibility is attached. I fear, it is too commonly the case in schools of medicine, that the professors deliver their lectures to their pupils in general terms, without attending to the particular improvement of individuals, by often putting questions to them, which will ascertain the quantum of their improvement, and stimulate them to daily attention and exertion ; and letting it be known, that they are not to expect degrees, unless they merit them.

There can be nothing more highly interesting to your best feelings, than conducting young men, of promising abilities, to the temple of medical fame ; and in making them eminently useful to their fellow-men, in one of the most important departments of science. If you are faithful to your pupils, to yourselves and to God, in this arduous employment ; then, if it be true, that they, who have done good, shall come forth to the resurrection of life ; if it be true, that every one shall be judged according to his works ; you may anticipate the period of your dissolution with complacency, being assured, that, at that all interesting moment, death will be disarmed of its sting, the thorn plucked from your bosom, your bed made soft, your pillow smoothed, and your aching temples bound with the chaplets of consolation. Then, being imbued with the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, you may humbly, but confidently, trust in the mercy of your Creator.

I cannot conclude, without addressing myself once more, to the young gentlemen, who expect this day to receive the honors of this Institution.

My friends, if you really deserve these honors, you have been hard at work for many years ; and you have loved your work ; and, in some measure, felt the importance of it. I say *in some measure*, for it is impossible you should feel all its importance, until you come to be engaged in ex-

tensive practice, and feel the immense responsibility under which you are placed. You must not suppose, you have completed your education, when you commence practice.—An unremitting attention to your books must accompany your practice through life.

An affable disposition and deportment are necessary, to your doing the most possible good. If your patient has reason to believe, that you sympathize with him in his distress, it will very much increase his confidence in your prescriptions ; and they will be likely to be more efficacious, than they otherwise would be. But, after every attention, and every care,—after nights of sleepless anxiety for the good of your patient ; instead of gratitude and thanks, you will sometimes meet with ill will and neglect ; so that the lines of the poet will be verified :

“ God and the doctor, all alike adore,
 “ Just on the brink of danger, not before ;
 “ The danger past, both are alike requited,
 “ God is forgotten, and the doctor slighted.”

The feuds and contentions of medical men are exceedingly detrimental to their usefulness. If you would wish to settle, where there are other physicians, call upon them all, and tell them your intentions, and express a wish to live upon good terms with them ; and never use any mean and sinister arts, to get business.

If any of your neighbors should attempt to injure you, do not retaliate. It may at first be hard to refrain ; but you will generally find it for your interest, to continue to treat them well, and pay no regard to their conduct towards you. The duellist will call this meanness of spirit ; but the philosopher and the christian will commend you for it.

If you wish to obey the precepts, and follow the example of the benevolent Jesus, your profession opens to you an

unbounded field for so doing. The sick and distressed, the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind, will apply to you, as they did to him, for assistance and relief. He constantly went about doing good ; and so must you. Besides your particular medical duty, you will often have the satisfaction of pouring the oil and wine of friendly advice and consolation, into the bleeding wounds of adversity.— And if your motives are pure, you will reap an abundant reward in the happiness of an approving conscience ; the smiles and approbation of all good men ; and, above all, in the transporting sound of—“ Come, ye blessed”—at your final audit.

Forty-five years of laborious practice in my profession, have whitened my head, and brought on the evening of my life. It has, for many years, been my delight, to see young men, well stored with medical knowledge, coming forward in the world ; and it has always given me much pleasure, to be, in any measure, instrumental in promoting their usefulness. And while I have the honor to preside in this Institution, it shall be the business of my declining years to promote its interests, in every way in my power.

As this Institution is so intimately connected with Williams College, it must be a matter of much joy to us that the Rev. President, the Honourable Board, and Faculty of that Seminary, have taken it by the hand, when in a state of great decline, and its friends had reason to fear, it would soon become extinct. By their unremitting exertions, and fostering care, it begins to emerge from its obscurity, and gives much promise, that it will once more shine with no inferior lustre ; and that, for centuries yet to come, the Senate, the Bench, the sacred Desk, the Bar, and the Science of medicine will reflect a steady and brilliant light, on that seat of the muses. We, also, look up to them for aid and patronage.

A word addressed to the Honourable Board of Trust of this Medical School, and I have done. This Institution is under great obligation to you, gentlemen, for your unremitting and gratuitous attention to its interest. Much, very much of its future eminence and usefulness, will depend upon your patronage and support. And should it rise to eminence, and become extensively useful, it will reflect no little honour on you, as being founded under your administration, and nurtured by your care. And if you, as christians, as patriots, and as lovers of science, devote your time and talents to the promotion of those great objects, for which you are associated ; then, you yourselves will not be forgotten, when your Father in heaven shall make up his jewels.

LECTURES commence on the second Wednesday of September, annually, and continue fifteen weeks. Degrees will be conferred at the Institution, on the Thursday following the close of the Lecture Term, and at the Annual Commencement of Williams College. Fees for all the Courses, \$40,00. Graduation Fee, \$12,00. Board, including Washing, Lodging, and Room Rent, \$1,75 per week.

The Anatomical Collection of Wax Models belonging to the Museum of the Institution, exhibiting most of the minute parts of the human body, are of great value. The arterial preparations, specimens of morbid anatomy, and the mineralogical cabinet, are continually increasing.

